

Marcel Broodthaers and « la parole des Moules »

Study Day

MASI Lugano

22 October 2022

11:00 -16:00 (with lunch break)

Fondazione
Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

info@masilugano.ch
+41 (0)58 866 4240
www.masilugano.ch

On the occasion of the exhibition *Marcel Broodthaers – Industrial Poems* at MASI | LAC, MASI has organised a study day with the aim of deepening the rich and fertile relation that Broodthaers established between visual arts and poetic language.

MASI Lugano offers its public the extraordinary opportunity to gather in Lugano some of the major experts on Marcel Broodthaers artistic practice. They will take part with their own insights to the study day organised on the occasion of the exhibition.

The relationship between visual arts and poetry characterises the whole artistic and literary production of Marcel Broodthaers: from his poetic writings of the 1950s, through the *Poèmes industriels*, the *Lettres Ouvertes*, up to the *Décors* of the 1970s. Inspired by the great poets of modernity, the artist creates a poetic universe that develops through the tension between opposites, disorientating and creating doubts in the viewer.

Poet, visual artist, editor and filmmaker, Marcel Broodthaers (Brussels 1924 – Cologne 1976) is among the major representatives of the international and artistic neo-avantgarde. His artistic practice is rich of rhetorical images, references to the 19th century and to the Belgium colonial past; these elements situate his work among the authentic and mature artistic productions of the 20th century, in which poetry, revolutionary ethics, art, passion and subversion coexist. In the 1940s, he was closely connected to the *Surréalisme Révolutionnaire*, while in the 1960s he was the protagonist of the artistic Belgium scene (Wide White Space Gallery; MTL Gallery; A 37 90 89). Later, in the 1970s his work spread internationally through the critical and art historical writings of the most influential writers of that time, like Barbara Reise, Pontus Hultén, Irmeline Lebeer, Pierre Restany, Harald Szeemann, Karel J. Geirlandt, Alain Jouffroy and Otto Hahn. Inspired by 19th century art (David, Ingres, Wiertz, Courbet), Broodthaers reflects on the controversial relation between words and images, reality and fiction, the work of art and its reproduction, through his use of verbal and figurative language in all its possible meanings and declinations, that can be poetic, visual, painterly and cinematographic.

In the evening of 27th September 1968, four years after his decision to become a visual artist with his iconic work *Pense-Bête* (1964), Broodthaers opened in his house in Brussels, the *Musée d'Art moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème siècle*. This was an artist's museum both real and imagined, composed by some empty shipping crates, a turtle, some garden chairs, a slide *carrousel*, some cinematographic set lights and a collection of postcards reproducing artworks of the 19th century, pasted on the wall. The artist centered the majority of his researches on the minute reconstruction and at the same time the total demystification of the concept of museum, intended as an institution of power, and in this way anticipating the provocations of conceptual art and the actions of the Institutional Critique.

Programme

Morning

LAC - Hall

11:00

Dr. Maria Elena Minuto (Université de Liège; KU Leuven)

Marcel Broodthaers: The Degree Zero of Writing - Italian

In the same year in which Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler published the essay *The Dematerialization of Art* and Sol LeWitt wrote the *Sentences on Conceptual Art*, Belgian poet and artist Marcel Broodthaers (1924-1976) exhibited for the first time at the Librairie Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris (October 29, 1968) a selection of his *Poèmes industriels*: a series of vacuum-formed plastic plaques defined by the artist as 'treating the image as word and the word as image.' In the *Industrial Poems* the letters of the alphabet, the pipes and the geometric forms perform paradoxical dimensions of language by giving new conceptual identities to the relationship between verbal and visual arts. The speech aims at reconstructing and examining the role of poetry in Broodthaers' intermedia works from a comparative and interdisciplinary approach: starting from the poetic writings of the 1960s, up to the analysis of the *Industrial Poems* (1968-1972).

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Fund for Scientific Research (F.R.S.-FNRS), **Maria Elena Minuto** is researcher at the University of Liège and KU Leuven. Excellence Grant Recipient at Wallonie-Bruxelles International (2020-21), her research focuses on Concrete and Visual Poetry, neo-avant-garde artists' publications and Marcel Broodthaers' intermedia practices. Key publications include *Scritture di immagini. Arti verbovisuali, dal secondo Novecento a oggi* (piano b. Arti e culture visive, 2020), *Marcel Broodthaers. Écrivain d'images, 1924-1976* (Éditions Garnier, 2020), *Material and Visual Poetics: The Italian and Belgian Neo-Avant-Garde Art of Publishing* (Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2019). Currently, she is working on the monograph entitled *Marcel Broodthaers. Il Bestiario* (Quodlibet, 2023).

12:00 Lunch break

LAC - Mezzanino

Afternoon

LAC - Sala 4

13:30

Prof. Dr. Deborah Schultz (Regent's University London)

The Industrial Poems of Marcel Broodthaers - English

Marcel Broodthaers produced works that combine succinct visual forms with multilayered concepts. Drawing together words and images in a wide range of media, all areas of his practice are inter-related. This lecture focuses on his *Industrial Poems* also known as *plastic plaques*. Produced only within a brief period between 1968 and 1972, they are explored as a means of entry into the complex web of Broodthaers's varied body of work.

Deborah Schultz is a Reader in Art History at Regent's University London where she teaches historiography as well as modern and contemporary art. Her research focuses on photographic archives and the representation of memory in 20th century and contemporary practices. Key publications include *Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue* (Peter Lang, 2007) and *Photo Archives: The Place of Photography*, edited with Geraldine Johnson (Routledge, 2003).

14:15

Prof. Dr. Steven Jacobs (Universiteit Gent and Universiteit Antwerpen)

Marcel Broodthaers and Cinema - English

Broodthaers is rarely seen as a filmmaker although he was a prolific one with a filmography containing at least 50 titles. Furthermore, his entire (non-filmic) oeuvre and his writings include many references to cinema, its (pre-)history, technology, and paraphernalia. Although Broodthaers is often presented as the ultimate artist of the “post-medium condition,” constantly merging artistic media, technologies, and methods of display, this lecture attempts to look at Broodthaers as a filmmaker in the strict sense. While his highly idiosyncratic films do not seem to have any direct connection with the film trends of his era, Broodthaers’s films rearticulate many of the interests and endeavors of key figures in the history of avant-garde cinema. Focusing on *La Clef de l’horloge* (1957-58), *La Pluie (projet pour un texte)* (1969), *La Pipe* (1969-1972), *Une seconde d’éternité (d’après une idée de Charles Baudelaire)* (1970), and *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1973-74), this lecture deals with Broodthaers’s unique cinematic language, and its preoccupation with duration, stasis, and the logics of mechanical reproduction.

Steven Jacobs is an art historian specialised in the interactions between film and the visual arts and architecture. His publications include *The Wrong House: The Architecture of Alfred Hitchcock* (O10 Publishers, 2007), *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), *The Dark Galleries: A Museum Guide to Painted Portraits in Film Noir* (AraMER, 2013), and *The City Symphony Phenomenon: Cinema, Art, and Urban Modernity Between the Wars* (Routledge, 2018). He teaches at Ghent University and the University of Antwerp.

15:00

Dr. Dieter Schwarz

A Surrealist, a Pop Artist, a Conceptual Artist? Marcel Broodthaers in His Time - English

The uncertain status of Marcel Broodthaers is part of his work – is he a poet, a filmmaker, an artist? Moreover, in which domain does his work inscribe itself – in late surrealism, in the international Pop art of the 1960s, or in the rising conceptual art of the 1970s? In this talk, the contemporary readings and misreadings of Broodthaers’ work which he cunningly provoked and undermined will be discussed.

Dieter Schwarz is born in Zurich, where he studied comparative literature and linguistics. Follows a post-graduate research on Stéphane Mallarmé in Paris. Since 1985 he has curated numerous contemporary and modernist art exhibitions and published numerous essays for catalogues and books. He is a curator (under his eye the exhibitions "Bruce Nauman: Models", Skulpturenhalle, Düsseldorf, 2020; "Multiples, Inc.", Galleria Marian Goodman, New York, 2021; "Juan Muñoz: Drawings", Center Botín, Santander, 2022) and he directed the Kunstmuseum Winterthur of Zurich from 1990 to 2017; he is also curator of the Skulpturenhalle of the Thomas Schütte Foundation. Recent publications have been devoted to Richard Artschwager (Gagosian, 2021), Fausto Melotti (Christian Stein, 2021), Gerhard Richter (Sies + Höke, 2022) and Ken Price (Larkin Erdmann, 2022). He is a member of the Menil Drawing Institute Advisory Committee, Houston, Texas, and of the board of the Thomas Schütte Foundation, Düsseldorf.